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**EDITORIAL PAGE—Our, Your & Others' Opinions**

# Fluoride Standard Deserves

Today the State Board of Health is expected to consider adoption of a fluoride emission standard for aluminum reduction plants.

The plant affected is the Anaconda Aluminum Co. plant near Columbia Falls. The proposed standard is 864 pounds of fluoride emission a day. The standard would take effect on June 30, 1972.

The company says it cannot meet such a standard by that date. It says it could meet a standard of 3,500 pounds a day in 1971 and 2,500 pounds a day in 1972. Emissions now are estimated at around 5,000 pounds a day and once were as high as 7,500 pounds a day.

Company officials say that if the 864 pounds a day standard is approved and enforced, the Columbia Falls plant will have to shut down.

Richard B. Steinmetz Jr., company vice president and general counsel, told Kalispell Rotarians on May 7 that the proposed standard, if passed and enforced, would close down the plant on June 30, 1972.

Donald W. Everett, the plant's vice president of operations, told the State Board of Health on May 21 that: "The net result, if the unrealistic standard is enforced, would be a closed plant."

Plant officials told the Flathead Gals Against Smog and Pollution (GASP) on June 11 "that moving the plant to the Ohio Valley would be cheaper than meeting proposed fluoride emission standards," according to a news story.

Is the company speaking the truth or is it talking through its hat? It is speaking the truth, and it is talking through its hat.

It is true that if the reduction plant faced an

absolute, unchangeable, merciless standard of 864 pounds of fluoride emission a day and had to meet that standard on or before June 30, 1972, the plant would have to close down.

But it doesn't have to meet that standard by that date, and company officials know it. The weasel word they use is "enforced."

Because they know perfectly well that the 864 pound emission standard will NOT become an absolute, unchangeable, merciless standard on June 30, 1972, or on any date before or after.

Ben Wake, state air pollution control director, said on June 30 that he didn't expect that the Columbia Falls plant would be able to meet the proposed standard for five years. He probably will recommend that the compliance date be set back to June 30, 1973. It doesn't much matter what date is picked. The actual compliance date — and it's only an estimate — will be sometime in 1975.

Then why have such a strict standard imposed so soon? Because a standard is a goal, not an absolute. A company which cannot meet a standard by a compliance date goes to the State Board of Health, tells why it cannot comply, and asks for a variance. That is what the Hoerner Waldorf pulp mill near Missoula recently did.

A variance is an exemption from the compliance date, and can be granted for up to a year but no longer. At the end of a year, the company concerned must ask for a renewal of its variance if it needs more time.

Each renewal requires a public hearing. At the hearing the company must convince the board of health that it is trying earnestly to meet the